

**AMHERST REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MINUTES  
May 26, 2010**

**LOCATION:** First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** John Coull, Aaron Hayden, Margaret Roberts, Lawrence Kelley. Member Jeanne Traester was absent

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Gretchen Fox, John Fox, Alicia Rubenstein, Seymour Friedman, Wilfred Manning, Donna Van Boom, Walter Wolnik

**STAFF PRESENT:** Larry Shaffer (Town Manager)

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The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

**Executive Session**

The Authority voted unanimously (4-0) by individual tally vote to go into Executive Session.

The Authority voted unanimously (4-0) by individual tally vote to come out of Executive Session and reopen the public session at 8:15 p.m.

**Minutes**

No minutes were available for review.

**Old Business**

Gateway District. The vision for areas I and II on the handout was reviewed.

It was noted that Planning Director Jonathan Tucker is preparing an RFP for the preparation of an urban renewal plan and form-based zoning for the area to be affected by the plan. The urban renewal plan will consider the property uses, telling the developer what they can do. The form-based zoning will dictate what the physical layout will be—what the end product will look and feel like.

It was agreed that the general vision included the following elements:

- providing student housing
- linking the downtown with UMass
- increasing the tax base, and,
- stabilizing neighborhoods nearby and town-wide by concentrating new student housing in a central location in a controlled setting.

Public comment was sought. Ms. Gretchen Fox asked what UMass wants. Could the community acquire the former fraternity row property without student housing being its principal purpose?

Ms. Alicia Rubenstein (Fearing St.) asked how many students would live in the proposed housing.

Mr. Seymour Friedman (corner of Allan and Fearing Streets) asked who will be responsible for the behavior of students living in this private housing? What kind of commercial uses could be expected, given that all the community seems to have is restaurants and bars? He feared that the project would destroy his neighborhood.

Mr. Hayden responded that UMass will continue to grow. Students will come to Amherst and will look for services. This project has the ability to figure out and provide constructive ways to deal with this extra 3,500 students.

Mr. Wilfred Manning (Fearing Street and Nutting Avenue) said that the concept all sounds good, but some landlords will buy houses and rent them to students.

Mr. Shaffer replied that better, higher quality housing will give both the student tenants and the owners the incentive to keep the buildings in good repair and well run.

Mr. John Fox (Fearing Street) said that the corridor could end up with more quality housing and still result in the neighborhood being destroyed. Adding 700 students to an area that already had problems did not seem like a useful solution.

Mr. Walter Wolnik stated that UMass was supposed to come back with a master plan. These neighbors should go to those meetings to give them input.

Ms. Gretchen Fox said that not just the Fearing Street area but Sunset and Lincoln Avenue needed to be protected, as well

Mr. Coull stressed that neighborhoods are important to the Authority, and stabilization of this and other neighborhoods was one of the purposes of the project.

### **Next Meetings**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for June 16.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Laurence Kelley, Clerk

Approved:

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ARA Chair

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Mr. Coull indicated that the purpose of this Executive Session was to consider the purchase and value of real property, and that conducting such discussions in public session might have a detrimental effect upon the negotiating position of the Authority and the Town.

Upon a motion by Mr. Kelley, and a second by Mr. Hayden, the members of the Authority voted as follows to go into executive session: Coull – Aye, Kelley – Aye, Roberts – Aye, Hayden – Aye.

Mr. Shaffer indicated that he had spoken to Gerry Gates about relocating the First Baptist Church and selling the current property. Mr. Gates had indicated that the church wanted a "presence" in the subsequent new building for community space. The church takes in approximately \$50,000 per year in parking revenue.

Mr. Shaffer agreed to have property appraised.

Larry Shaffer reported on a lunch meeting with UMass Vice-Chancellor Tom Milligan, who had indicated that the Chancellor has the Gateway project on "top of his agenda" and that UMass will come up with conditions. VC Milligan indicated that student housing was the priority from the University's perspective, and that some economic value needed to come back to the University in exchange for transfer of the property.

Mr. Shaffer indicated that an appraisal of the former fraternity row property might come back with a worth of \$1 million.

Barry Roberts owns a few properties around Atty. Richard Howland's office on North Pleasant Street and a few properties near Kendrick Park. Mr. Roberts is thinking of selling to a developer who would build 300 units of student housing.

Hillel House has indicated an interest in selling, as well. Currently they provide housing and kosher food for Jewish students.

At 8:15 p.m., upon a motion by Mr. Kelley, and a second by Mr. Hayden, the members of the Authority voted as follows to come out of Executive Session: Coull – Aye, Kelley – Aye, Roberts – Aye, Hayden – Aye.

Respectfully submitted:

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Laurence Kelley, Clerk

Approved:

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ARA Chair